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Intelligence Data

U.S. Gets Benefit From Defections

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WASHINGTON—In the secret war between Soviet spies and U.S. counterspies, intelligence experts have long known that Moscow often makes good use of undercover agents from its Communist Bloc satellites to penetrate this country's security systems and steal critical defense secrets.

In recent months, however, American counterintelligence agencies have begun reaping the benefits of an indirect windfall, as the latest spy scandal involving a Mountain View, Calif., technician and Polish intelligence agents illustrate.

The struggle for greater freedom and change in Poland's Communist system, and the subsequent military crackdown, have sent shock waves through the Polish intelligence service, rated one of the most formidable operating against the United States.

As a result, increased defections from within the ranks of the Polish service, known as Sluzba Bezpieczenstwa or SB, have given the United States a wealth of new information—not only about matters behind the Iron Curtain but also about Communist spying in this country.

"As a result of martial law, there has been a breakdown of institutions, and defectors have come forward," a U.S. intelligence source confirmed.

It was just such a defector, a former high-ranking officer in the SB who has fled to the United States, who played a key role in the FBI's investigation of James D. Harper Jr. of Mountain View.

Secrets About Minuteman Missile

Harper was arrested last month on charges of selling secrets to Polish agents about the Minuteman missile, one of the elements in the triad of strategic weapons relied on by the United States to deter nuclear war.

Information from Polish defectors is welcome indeed to U.S. counterintelligence agents because Poland and other satellite countries sometimes have been highly effective in obtaining secret high-technology and military information.

Why are the satellite countries often more effective than the Soviet Union's vaunted KGB? In large part, the answer lies in the nature of U.S. rules governing Soviet citizens in this country, as distinct from the rules applying to Communist Bloc citizens, and not in any lack of competence among Soviet agents.

Satellite country intelligence services are freer to travel in the United States and have far more access to American citizens and institutions than do Soviets, a U.S. intelligence source noted.

"There are no restrictions on travel of bloc country personnel in the United States, while there are on the Soviets," he said. "The Soviets restrict our travel and we, in turn, restrict theirs."

"There's no question that Polish diplomats have a far greater degree of access and are more acceptable to Americans than Russians," an official said. "They are not perceived as so threatening because they're not about to go to war with us, so people are much more willing to talk to Poles."

'The Cream of the Crop'

"The Soviets are considered the cream of the (intelligence) crop, but they are going to draw a lot more attention than, say, a charming Czech," said one official involved in counterintelligence work. "The relationship has always been that Soviets task the satellites for obtaining information."

Just how the system works was graphically outlined in court papers filed in connection with the Harper case, as was the role of the Polish defector in the FBI's investigation.

An FBI affidavit made public after the arrest of Harper, an electronics worker, described how SB operatives compiled a "shopping list" of American high-technology items based on a master list prepared in Moscow. Individual SB operatives were given sublists based on their sources of information and their areas of technological capability.

The SB agents then compiled a list of wanted items for each of their sources in the United States. Harper, through his attorney, William A. Dougherty, told the FBI he broke down his shopping list "as a function of my contacts in government, private industry (and) free lancers to yet another sublist."

The defector in the Harper case told U.S. intelligence officials who debriefed him that Soviet KGB officers maintain close contacts with Polish intelligence. Each *wydzial*, or intelligence unit, had its own KGB liaison officer, the defector said, according to court papers in the Harper case.

Each year, the former SB officer said, he was given a list of information he should attempt to obtain, with particular items ordered "from high levels in the KGB."

At one point, he was told to obtain information concerning anti-tank rockets, and requests for military information had priority over other requests.

Should Harper or others involved in the Minuteman case come to trial, the defecting Polish intelligence officer would be expected to be a key witness for the prosecution.

If that happens, it will mark this case as highly unusual. Often, U.S. officials decide it is more important to protect sources of information about the secret war than it is to have a public trial.